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ESSAY *on the following Subject, proposed by the ACADEMY,*
viz. " On STYLE in WRITING, considered with respect to
" Thoughts and Sentiments as well as Words, and indicating the
" Writer's peculiar and characteristic Disposition, Habits and Powers
" of Mind." *By the Rev. ROBERT BURROWES, D. D.*
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DOCTOR BLAIR says the best definition he can give of style is " the peculiar manner in which a man expresses his conceptions by means of language." This definition however he saw would leave style merely verbal, and therefore he proceeds to amend it by observing " that it is different from mere language or words—that it has always reference to an author's manner of thinking—and that to separate the style from the sentiment is extremely difficult. No wonder," says he, " that these two should be so intimately connected, as the style is nothing else than that sort of expression which our thoughts most readily assume." Hence he remarks that different countries have been noted for peculiarities of style suited to their different temper and genius; a remark which he afterwards

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wards on some occasions applies to individuals. But in what manner this variety in thinking produces its effects on the clothing of the thought, and what are the peculiarities of style which are suited thus to the several diversities in temper and genius—these are points into which, though directly connected with his explication of style, he has not systematically enquired: much less has he gone into an examination of those dispositions and habits which give to individuals their peculiar cast of thought, and account for the different mode in which different authors treat the same subject. In short he has omitted the consideration of that quality which, from its obvious analogy to the difference of style in language, the words of the question proposed by the Academy have properly termed Style in thought. This view of the subject being peculiarly interesting, and in a great measure new, the design of the following pages is to point out its importance, and to give some slight specimens of its utility: the author with great deference submits to the Academy what may perhaps serve to furnish some hints as to the mode in which it may be advantageously treated of by such as have more leisure and superior talents to pursue the investigation.

THOSE who have written on Style have usually considered it as taking its character from the varieties of the subject, and the species of composition in which it was employed. Thus the distinct styles of history, of oratory and philosophy, of epic, lyric and dramatic poetry, have been diffusively treated of by numerous critics of the antient and modern world. But
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an author's peculiar habits of thinking predominate over the general laws of critics. There is no style so directly appropriate to any one species of writing as to exclude the operation of the various habits and dispositions of different writers, while the writings of the same author, though in different species of composition, have a certain degree of similarity in their style which at once points him out to the intelligent reader. The History of Livy is very different from that of Tacitus, and the style of Virgil's epic poetry very unlike to that of Homer: while Cicero appears the same in his letters, his orations and his philosophy; and Doctor Johnson never fails to discover himself in his debates, his biography and his morals, in his compositions and his conversation.

THAT such peculiarities in style of thought should be found amongst authors is not at all surprizing; for what is there in which men are alike? Their gesture, their voice, their gait, their hand-writing, their countenance, are all peculiar and appropriate to each individual; why then shall we suppose that their minds are not various? Various habits of thinking and dispositions of mind do in fact present themselves to us at every moment and in every situation. The different impressions which the same object makes on different individuals, the different reception which the same composition meets with from different readers, the different testimonies given of the same fact by different witnesses possessing equal opportunities of observation are all so many evident proofs of this. In those works which are peculiarly the works of minds invent-

ing, combining, and arranging, these characteristic varieties are more conspicuous, and those who have made such works their study seldom fail to appropriate them to their respective authors. The skilful musician can readily discover the composer by his style, or the performer by his manner; and the connoisseur in painting can readily distinguish the pictures of one school from those of another, and even discern the hand of each master in pictures of the same age, and country, and subject. Literary works may be found to exhibit equal or greater variety, proceeding from the different habits of thinking in their respective authors. In the works of writers whose modes of life were very different, and characters opposite in the extreme, these varieties are obvious to the least observant reader, and a more accurate acquaintance with style and knowledge of character will enable the more judicious critic to discover distinguishing marks in the writings even of authors who lived much together, and applied to the same sorts of composition. There is no man who will not perceive the different minds of Mr. Sterne and Doctor Johnson in a single page of their works; and there is no reader possessing any claim to acuteness or critical sagacity who will not in the papers of the Spectator find internal evidence sufficient to discriminate the essays of Mr. Addison from those of Sir Richard Steele.

Corporeal diversities have a manifest and important use : they are marks which serve to the purposes of distinguishing each individual from every other, and thus prevent infinite
confusion

confusion and mistake. Different habits of thinking in like manner distinguish different authors from each other, prevent the possibility of issuing literary forgeries, or by borrowed names gaining credit with the world. The dignity attached to the profession of an author will not suffer him to travel incognito. Varieties in the dispositions of mind give to society all its charms, and recommend its duties. They ensure an attentive reception to the stranger who stands in need of it; for they introduce him to us as a new character, and they send us from the flattery and the indolence of domestic endearment to more extended benevolence, and an active intercourse with a chequered world, where the varieties of disposition relieve varieties of want, and receive reciprocal gratifications. From these varieties, as peculiarly shewn in literary works, some important advantages will be found to arise. There is no dull uniformity to disgust and fatigue him who wishes to acquire extensive and various information: every thing worth being diffused through the world, or transmitted to posterity, finds some person whose habits lead him to take notice of and qualify him for recording it; and every man of whatever disposition will meet some author or other whose powers of mind and style of thought will interest his attention, and seduce him to information.

Two observations of acknowledged truth in criticism establish beyond all doubt the powerful influence of peculiar disposition of mind in each individual author. The first is, that the same person is rarely found to excel in more than one species of

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composition.

composition. He excels in that species to which his habits of thinking are adapted; and in others the degree of his failure is always proportioned to the degree of their distance from this. The case of literary mimicry is no exception, very few persons having ever succeeded in varieties of imitation; and of such as have practised it with success it has been observed, that few of them have had marked peculiarities in their own manner, or have given proofs of original genius. The second observation is, that those authors who by the peculiar species of composition they are engaged in are compelled to introduce different persons speaking in their proper characters, have not often succeeded in their efforts to give them their appropriate style of thought and sentiment. In dramatic writing this circumstance constitutes an acknowledged difficulty, diminished however by the characters originating often in the author's mind, without any external standard to which they are referred, and being known only by that dialogue which the author has given: diminished also by the hurry of action, the brisk interruptions of different personages, and the shortness of each separate speech. The difficulty is more evident in periodical essays where introduced characters write letters of considerable length; and in histories, where speeches are given at large, as supposed to have been spoken by the orators in person. In the orations recorded by Thucydides there is much good sense, information and argument, but in not more than one or two of them is there any nice discrimination of character.

SIMILAR

SIMILAR habits of thinking, and similar dispositions of mind will more or less prevail among inhabitants of the same country, and thus lay the foundation of a national style of thought and sentiment. The different idioms of different languages prevent close translation. The variety in minds and habits of different countries cause an equal difficulty in imitating an author of a different nation. But a similarity of individual mind will overcome the difficulty, and enable a writer of whatever country to imitate or translate with success. From this cause is derived the excellence of Rowe's translation of Lucan : and to the same cause we may ascribe the superiority of Swift's imitations of Horace to those of the other wits of his age. The journey to Brundisium shews us what circumstances made impression on the mind of Horace, and traditional stories of Swift's habits shew that many of them would with him have met a similar reception. Swift had Horace's knowledge of common life, his fondness for familiar incident, and his turn of easy and natural expression. Milton, according to his own taste, has imitated one of Horace's odes, by giving an English version with all the Latin constructions ; and Pope has followed his own established habits by imitating some of the satires in ornamented phraseology and harmonious versification.

If the proper object of mankind be man, an enquiry into the varieties of the human mind, a discovery of them in their natural effects, in the style of thought, traced out through the medium of literary productions and style of language, could not fail of being highly useful. Critics, who have confined their
observations

observations on style to expression and language, have omitted the most dignified and important consideration of their subject. They have begun at the wrong end, and applied themselves solely to examine the effect, in the hope of being able to correct its faults, without any attention to that which is their cause. The consequence must be extremely injurious to literature: authors neglect the cultivation of their minds for the polishing of sentences, and never having formed a true estimate of their powers rashly engage in works ill suited to their habits, and derogatory to their fame. Criticism becomes verbal instead of rational; and men begin to write and to publish, who have never once employed themselves in learning to think.

BESIDES the critical uses which may be derived from speculations of the sort here pointed out, such speculations may be yet farther recommended by the general pleasure with which they would be received by every description of readers. The developing of character is an universal and favourite employment: every person conceives himself an adept in the art, and thinks he possesses a knowledge of criticism which give peculiar certainty to his conjectures. Lavater observes, in commendation of his art, that every man is in some degree a physiognomist: and I believe very few persons ever read a book, at least a book of fancy, without forming some ideas of the author's character. If this be so universally done, it is desirable that some assistance be given by which it may be done with judgment; by which it may be regulated to greater certainty, and directed to some advantage.

To

To the want of sufficient information in the art the absurd conjectures which are often formed respecting authors are to be ascribed. The lady who from Thomson's poems found reason to persuade herself that he was much addicted to swimming attempted a species of mental physiognomy for which she was not qualified. It is not every description, made necessary to an author by his subject, which is to be considered as giving certain information of his habits and propensities: a man who has chosen for his topic the pleasures of the country, may be said to have a general fondness for rural life or rural situation, but he will be obliged sometimes to depict scenes of which he has not felt the pleasure, and sometimes to describe sports of which he has not partaken. The indolence and the benevolence of Thomson appear in many parts of his writings; but unless he had gone out of his way to treat of swimming, or had treated of it more frequently or more fully than was proportioned to its importance towards his general theme, there was no reason for supposing it an amusement in which he took particular delight.

AN accurate and complete treatise on style in writing, considered with respect to thoughts and sentiments as well as words, and as indicating the writer's peculiar and characteristic dispositions, habits and powers of mind, would, it must be confessed, be a work of great difficulty: it would require a perfect knowledge of the human mind in all its varieties, and an acquaintance with the works of authors who wrote

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in various languages, at distant ages and in different species of composition: it would require also a perfect insight into character, national and individual: a sagacity which could not be imposed on by assumed disguise in the writings it would examine, and a resolute understanding, which could set aside all deception of internal prejudice, and repress the forwardness of its own vanity in forming its judgments. To aid and direct such qualities in making the enquiry, an accurate biographical account of various authors would be essentially necessary; for general observations on the subject could rest their veracity only on an induction of many particulars confirmed by actual fact. As to the antient authors, so little can at this distance of time be known of their personal habits and private characters, that any critic who would found his theories on them could at best entertain us with probable conjecture. Nearly the same objection holds with respect to foreign writers. It must therefore be from works of a later date only, and chiefly from the works of our own countrymen, that any such theories are to seek stability: and we know how much the pre-dispositions and passions of more modern biographers tend to prejudice the mind of the reader, and misrepresent the character of him whose life they write: we know how difficult it is to develope the truth from the contradictory reports of authors under impressions of opposite affections, and to form a just notion of the features of the original from the pictures drawn by enemies or by admirers.

NATIONAL

NATIONAL character is much more easily distinguishable in writings than the individual character of the respective authors; as being the effect of causes operating with more steadiness and on a great number of writers: it is therefore better understood and more readily perceived: and hence we find those dramatic authors, who have little knowledge of manners and little acquaintance with the modes of individual character, find a never-failing resource in the introduction of some Irish or Scotch or Frenchman, by a difference in his language and dress to make himself known at once to the vulgar part of the audience, and to keep alive and flatter their prejudices. National character is sometimes so strongly marked as to destroy the perception of singular differences, as provincial pronunciations are lost to a foreigner in the peculiarity of the general accent. The style of French poetry in general is so different from that of other nations, that a person of a different country does not soon arrive at the art of distinguishing the style of one French poet from that of another.

THE peculiar species of composition also will sometimes leave very little information to be collected as to the peculiar and characteristic habits of the mind of an author. All writers of pastoral poetry are from the modes of life they would represent obliged to separate themselves as much as possible from their own habit and character. Hence we find this species of writing has been rarely cultivated but by juvenile poets, who not having yet acquired a discriminate character could more easily adopt any which might come recommended to them.

Dramatic works, by the strength with which they put forward a variety of characters, usually keep that of their author unperceived. Those writings in which the author gives his detail in person, and particularly oratory and lyric poetry, where he speaks from the fulness and force of his own mind, must bear the strongest marks of his peculiar habits of thinking.

ONE author, it is true, often imitates another, and thus presents the peculiarities of another's mind instead of his own. When the imitations are general, when authors of one description imitate authors of another, in the same sense in which the moderns are generally said to imitate the ancients, a false colouring is undoubtedly laid on which disguises the truth, and traditional sentiments are conveyed, which not being the genuine offspring of the author's mind bear little impression of its peculiarities. The works of authors however cannot be wholly made up of such fictitious materials, and even among these it may be observed that the selection of some particular authors from among the whole class, the preference given to some parts of their works above others, may give information as to the individual mind of the writer who borrows from them. When the imitation is particularly confined to one favourite author, some degree of similarity in turn of thought or disposition may in all cases be concluded on. If this has not led to the imitation it will naturally follow it. The same habits of thinking, the same modes of considering a subject, will be insensibly contracted. The taste will be formed on the favourite model, and opinions delivered in a style of which we commend

commend the force and beauty, or from authority which we admire and respect, cannot fail of becoming our own, the principles of our reasoning, and probably the rules of our conduct.

From these obstructions which the strength of national character, the peculiar species of composition, or the fondness for imitation interpose, it is evident that individual character cannot in all cases be discovered to the same degree of clearness and certainty, or with the same facility. But greater minds (and these are best worth our attention) will overleap these obstacles and shew themselves to the discerning; and though there may be many parts of every author's works which do not transmit the peculiarities of his mind, it is always sufficient if there are some which do. It happens much to our advantage in speculations of this sort, that these parts of an author's works are usually more attractive, and always the best executed.

THOSE parts of an author's works in which we are to look for the clearest indications of his habits and dispositions of mind, are the parts which are not absolutely essential to his narrative, but which are introduced and ornamental; and hence in those works where such prevail his habits and dispositions are most apparent. Those parts which are brought in to please the reader are usually such as have pleased the writer. When a man quits the direct path, it is always to go by some way which he likes better; when he stops for any time on his road, it is because he has met with something in

which he finds delight. The digressions of an author are, in like manner, indications of what is agreeable to his dispositions, for he cannot expatiate on what he dislikes. Metaphors and similes he will seek in those sources which his prior occupations have made familiar and his habits have endeared to his taste. Thus Pope is found to have been a lover of the arts, and Dryden of the sciences. Every allusion in the writings of Cowley and the other metaphysical poets is taken from remote learning and abstruse philosophy; and Mr. Addison's fondness for classical literature has made that the principal source from whence most of his illustrations are derived.

IN general, where an author has written much and has written well, his works will always shew what degree of antecedent labour has been expended in furnishing his store-house with literary treasures, what accustomed employments have given given facility to his exertions, and what modes of life have been familiarized to him by ordinary habits. In Milton's works we see proofs of a life spent in study, of every source of information searched out with the most persevering diligence. In Shakespeare we see such an extensive knowledge of human nature as could only have been acquired by much time spent in actual observation. In the writings of Swift we perceive habits of familiar conversation with ordinary persons; in those of Dr. Johnson we readily discover that his habit was reasoning, and his speech was dissertation.

LORD

LORD BACON has from Plato's allusion considered the understanding of every individual man as a cavern which makes the appearances of things vary much from the reality. From the diversity of appearances of the same object in different caverns the different nature of the caverns themselves may be discovered. Thus it is we talk of the various lights in which the same subjects appear to different writers, and from their different modes of treating them the characteristic differences of their own understandings obviously appear. When you see a writer always considering each particular subject as a part of something more extensive, dealing out general aphorisms and searching after universal certainties, you have an evident mark of a spirit towering above and looking down upon his subject, imperious and commanding. When you see a writer collecting every thing within individual bounds, taking up the subject no higher than itself, and careful not to digress or go beyond it, you have a mark of a mind humble, minute and timid. When you find no assertion without a quotation to enforce it, you may ascertain of the author that his intellect is shackled to authority, and that he probably sees little merit but in learning. When you find thoughts perpetually digressing from each other by trivial and irrelevant associations, you may pronounce of the writer that his habits are mean, his judgments slender, and his understanding incapable of reasoning and argument. By these criteria we would form this decision on his understanding from his conversation, and by the same we may equally form it from his writings.

THOUGH

THOUGH it must be admitted that it is not always safe to infer a man's moral character from his expressed sentiments, yet perhaps from the writings of an author some inferences as to his moral as well as his intellectual qualities may with caution be drawn. We may be satisfied of the existence of those faults which his utmost industry could not conceal, though we may not always give him credit for those virtues which he may possess. No man from their writings can hesitate to pronounce generally that Addison was a man of virtue and religion, and Horace voluptuous and a debauchee. Such information is notorious—*votiva veluti in tabella vita patet*. Sometimes however the deduction is more subtle and the proofs less obvious, in proportion to the knowledge which the author may have of his own defects, and the address he can employ in concealing them; yet sometimes the difficulty of knowing himself, sometimes his contempt of his reader's sagacity in making the the discovery, sometimes his awkwardness, and frequently his vanity, betray a character which he himself does not know, or which perhaps, with all its faults, he contemplates with pleasure. An author, as well as all other men, though he be not perfectly satisfied with all parts of his own character, finds consolation in contemplating some features of it for his disgust at others: this favourite part of the author's character he labours for occasions of introducing, praises those who possess it, and magnifies its excellence. His vanity would not suffer him to debate on a moral or intellectual quality which he knew he did not possess, nor could he be comfortable in holding out perpetually to public detestation what he was conscious was his
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own indulged habit or private defect. Pope dwells on the poverty of his rivals, because it was his prudence and his pride to have acquired a competence; while most other poets disclose and commend their poverty by inveighing against the ignorance of the great who do not reward their talents, or by frequent, and vehement declamation against a love of that wealth they never have possessed.

AUTHORS sometimes make their works direct channels for the conveyance of their character and history to the public. Thus Milton tells us of his blindness; Virgil puts a narrative of his own fortunes into the mouth of his shepherd Tityrus; Swift, in his *Cadenus and Vanessa*, is known to have intended a justification of himself against a misrepresented story; and Savage celebrates the talents and apologizes for the profligacy of the bastard. I am sometimes inclined to suspect authors of presenting directly their own pictures to the reader. Smollet certainly did this in his character of Bramble, making at the same time some of the facts recorded in his travels the incidents in his novel. Dr. Johnson has given us at full length the portrait of a Mr. Johnson, an imaginary member of a literary club, as drawn by Blackmore in the first essay of an unsuccessful periodical work. I suspect this extraordinary quotation has been made, that the reader may be surprised into a comparison of the great qualities of the biographer himself with those which Blackmore, as if by a sort of prophetic second sight, had bestowed on his gigantic Johnson.

THUS

THUS it seems that some information, both with respect to an author's intellectual and moral character, is always to be collected from his writings. In some cases it may be more difficult to collect it than it may in others. In some works the inference may more nearly approach to certainty, in others the degrees of probability may be slight, but in all some information will reward the research, and the research itself is above all other employments of the mind interesting and instructive. To discover character, to trace out the causes of literary excellence and defects, to explain the efficacy and operation of habits, to exhibit the influence of the morals on the understanding, will afford a dignified exercise to the critic, an useful one to the metaphysician, and an agreeable one to the moralist.

THE first object of every author's attention is the choice of his subject. The choice of this is an act directed by the habits and dispositions of the author, and therefore indicative of these. From the infinite variety of subjects that one is selected, which either is most pleasing to the fancy of the author, or in which he thinks he is most likely to excel; in either case it is that which best suits his habits, dispositions and powers of mind. Achilles was known at the court of Lycomedes by his preferring the armour to all the toys brought by Ulysses; and, from the subjects they chose for writing on, we may certainly infer that Virgil loved peace, and that Milton had an high respect for religion. The English Garden, is the work of a poet viewing scenes of external nature with the eye of a painter; the Botanic Garden, of a poet studying her internal operations with the abstraction of a philosopher. The latter
could

could only have been written by an author whose habits had cherished a fondness for philosophic speculation, and whose situation had given him opportunities of becoming acquainted with its modern experimental progress: the former might naturally be expected from the friend of Sir Joshua Reynolds and his associate in an edition of Du Fresnoy.

THIS remark, however, must be received with some limitation. An author writes on many and various subjects. His choice is not always left free to the influence of his characteristic dispositions. On several occasions these are made sacrifices to his convenience, his necessities or his ambition. He often writes on subjects occasionally recommended, on the story that is popular, on the event that is recent, at the suggestions of his own vanity or the command of his patron. Professed authors are not more disinterested than other men: and a name in the literary world is of such value that a bookseller often pays an high price for prefixing it to a work, which not being suitable to the author's disposition only derogates from his reputation. Almost all occasional writings, prose as well as poetry, pamphlets and odes, contain within themselves the elements of speedy dissolution. We should say then that it is only the choice of a subject in which the author has excelled, which may be considered as giving some intimation as to his habits and dispositions.

THE nature of the subject selected in a great measure ascertains the species of composition in which it is to be treated. Where this is left a matter of doubt the habits and mind of the author must decide. Whether the same catastrophe shall be the subject of an elegy or of a tragedy depends wholly on the writer's

fondness for contemplating the emotions of his own mind, or viewing external and visible effects of their operations on the character of others, on the pensive or observant turn of the author. Whether the same ludicrous incident shall give occasion to a comedy or to a mock heroic depends on the author's acquaintance with the living or the learned world, with men or with books.

OTHER matters relative to the nature of the work are in like manner ascertained from the characteristic habits and dispositions of the writer. A professed admirer of the ancients will divide his ode into strophe and antistrophe: Mr. Harris, from his fondness for the Platonic school, has given us his philosophy in dialogue, and the gentleman who afterwards translated the letters of Cicero and Pliny might naturally be expected to publish his essays in the epistolary form. A man of extended and discursive views will not confine himself within the bounds of rhyme, but will compose his epic or didactic poem in blank verse. Perhaps an enthusiasm in the general cause of political liberty, or a horror of licentiousness, with a fondness for regulation, are often in the minds of poets and critics connected with the principles which decide them in the comparison of blank verse with rhyme. Whimsical as this opinion may seem it is confirmed by several instances. Pope always wrote in rhyme, and Doctor Johnson is its great advocate; while in all their more important works, Cowper, Thomson, Milton and Akenfide employed blank verse.

WHEN the subject has been chosen, and the species and mode of composition ascertained, the thoughts and sentiments of an
author

author come next under consideration. Various views of his subject will present themselves, various trains of associated thought will successively arise in his mind. But associations of that particular sort to which his habits have been formed will occur most readily, and be received with the cordiality of intimate acquaintance. Man has been said to be a bundle of habits: habit then will account for the frequent recurrence of a kindred train of thinking in the mind of the same person, and the predisposition for that to which it has been accustomed will secure to it a preference.

SHOULD the same range of thought present itself to the mind of authors different in their habits and dispositions, what has been said may serve to shew that it would not with all meet an equally friendly reception. It is not, however, at all probable that the same range of thought should occur. No man, it has been observed, forgets his original trade. The rights of nations, says Doctor Johnson, sink into questions of grammar when grammarians discuss them. A mathematician considering a subject not mathematical will from habit employ himself in an analytic investigation of its properties and causes. A lawyer will apply to solving objections and scrutinizing distinctions. Professional men of every description will recur to those ideas and trains of thought to which they have been accustomed. Dramatic writers, who understand character, constantly mark out each profession, by a peculiar train of thought as well as a technical language.

EVERY literary work must contain narratives of some events, descriptions of some objects, expression of emotions and enforcements of opinion. It does not seem extraordinary that opinions should be enforced by arguments drawn from topics which are congenial to an author's dispositions, and which therefore have proved themselves to him the most powerful instruments of conviction. It will readily be admitted that the same emotion will shew itself differently in different minds and tempers, and that of course the modes of expressing such emotions will vary considerably. With respect to narratives of events and descriptions of objects this is equally certain, though not equally obvious. Each event is attended by a great number of circumstances relating to persons, motives, places, instruments: each object has a variety of particular adjuncts accompanying it in its actual existence. To enumerate all these, if it were possible, would be unnecessary and disgusting. A selection is therefore, in all cases, to be made, and the varieties of such selections naturally proceed from the variety in the views and habits of the authors who relate the events, or describe the objects. If anecdotes related in private conversation partake of the character of the story-teller, the same must be presumed of the biographer, who undertakes his task through the impulse of some affection, which of necessity gains strength in the progress of his work. If no two eye-witnesses of the same fact agree exactly in their reports, a greater agreement cannot be expected in the records of historians viewing various communications of events, and equally under the influence of variety of temper, and understanding. Travellers,
describing

describing the same identical scene in nature have been observed often to make a different selection of its circumstances. When the object then to be described is general, of an intellectual nature, or of extended influence, poetic fancy in various minds must be expected to vary the description. The Allegro and Il Penseroso of our great poet are beautiful illustrations of the variety of selections made from the great store-house of nature by men under the influence of different habits and dispositions.

AFTER the sentiments the language naturally comes to be considered; and if the former indicate the author's powers of mind, the latter, directly connected with them, must give corresponding information. *Verbaque provisam rem haud invita sequuntur.* A writer's language may sometimes be had from imitation, but, as has been mentioned, it must be either some predisposition in favour of a particular author's habits of thinking, which induces the imitation of his style of words, or some striking peculiarities in his language, which by a natural association would insinuate also and impress his style of thought; so that the author's language is the offspring of antecedent dispositions of mind directing him to models suitable, or by reflex influence of words on the understanding it generates kindred habits of thinking, of which it is therefore indicative. Every writer's vocabulary is made up of the words he has learned in conversation or in reading; conversing with those who have regulated the mode of his thinking, or reading the works of those authors who are his favourites. Collocation, arrangement and connection he learns in the very same manner.

manner. His style in language is thus congenial to his style of thinking.

If it shall be a matter for his option what words he shall prefer, or what arrangement he shall give them, I do not see what there is to regulate that choice but the habits and powers of his mind, directing a language congenial to the train and modes of his thought, and exciting similar sensations. The propriety and beauty of language is this analogy to the train of thought to be expressed by it; and accordingly we find that all the terms which are applied to denote diversities of style do in strictness of primitive acceptation belong to thinking and its modes.

THE habits, dispositions and powers of mind sometimes exert a direct influence over the words and language. Accuracy of thought will naturally demand precise expression, and obscurity in style will be the consequence of dull conceptions. Licentious phrases and strained figures of speech will follow the unrestrained indulgence of wayward imagination, and foreign words always assume a place in the works of an author who has been in habits of intercourse with foreign learning, or is guided by a foppish affectation of polite society. Obsolete idioms mark pedantic habits, and technical language is the necessary result of professional employment. Redundance of copulatives and particles acknowledge a difficulty in perceiving any connection but what cannot possibly be overlooked; circumstances ill arranged betray habitual negligence

negligence or forgetfulness, and the repetition of tautologous sounds can only proceed from the emptiness of the understanding.

FROM the style of words joined with the style of thought and sentiment a full portrait of the writer's intellectual habits and powers may be drawn, as far at least as is necessary for understanding his works, or useful for admonition from his example. We may form a proper estimate of the value of his authority from the discovery we may thus make of his means of information and capacities of judging, and we may learn what in his habits was conducive to his improvement, and what gave rise to his faults. Such useful knowledge confirmed from facts in the known history of some writers may furnish matter for analogical reasoning as to others, concerning whom we have no authentic biographical accounts ; but it may more especially supply useful documents to young proficients in literature, and valuable lessons of prudence, of diligence, and of morals to all.

THUS from the writings of Milton we may see the value of studious habits, even under the greatest disadvantages, and we are taught the folly of those who would encourage imagination by repressing learning. From the works of Shakespeare, a man, from whom birth and circumstances have withheld all direct communication with ancient authors, may find that " with small Latin and " less Greek " a poet may, through a diligent examination of the human heart and an acute observation of human life, rise to the
highest

highest pinnacle of celebrity. From Pope we learn the value of prudential habits in life and literature ; from the paucity and poverty of character in Virgil's *Æneid* we see that to great works something more is required than the labours of the study ; and from every considerable defect of a great author we learn the injuries of a vain or imperious temper, which will not submit to established regulation, nor stoop to consult such friends as have capacity to judge and honesty to censure.

ESSAY, No. II. *on the same Subject as the preceding.*

By the same Author.

IF in the preceding essay it has been established that there is a style in thought depending on the varieties of the intellectual character, and therefore indicative of these, it will follow that from the same source some information respecting the moral character may also be derived. Dispositions are generated and habits confirmed by the approbation of the mind, over which they in turn exert a reciprocal influence. When the moral qualities do not obey the controuling direction of the understanding, what has depraved the morals will usually be found to warp and bias the judgment; since external circumstances, which produce forcible effects on one part of man's constitution, do more or less affect every other. The varieties

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then of moral dispositions and peculiar habits may be traced out through that variety in the intellectual character with which they are sometimes associated as cause and effect, and sometimes as common effects of the same cause diffusing a general operation over the whole system. The style of thought therefore which flows from the one must in some degree indicate the other.

THAT an author mixes much of himself with his subject, however ridiculously and extravagantly Sterne in his life of Mr. Shandy may have caricatured the system, is undoubtedly true. That an author's dispositions may thence be investigated we have testimony of much weight and antiquity. *Laudibus arguitur vini vinofus Homerus* is the assertion of Horace, and the dislike of Euripides to the fair sex has been long since collected from the unfavourable pictures of them he has always drawn. Longinus tells of internal dispositions necessary for producing the sublime, and Quintilian gives a catalogue of the moral qualities which an orator should possess. But on this question every man bears testimony for himself; for does not every man think that he can in some degree anticipate the mode in which those with whose minds and habits he is acquainted will act on any particular occasion, or will treat of a given subject? I do not mean to say that he will be able to write a treatise in the style of each author of his acquaintance. There is a division of literary as well as natural labour which makes the best use of the productive capital by confining each writer to one particular species of employment.

And

And if Milton has been thought by critics to have shewn some melancholy in his mirth, even in poems of the same structure, and in which he had intended to contrast them, versatility in style of thought should be deemed not so much an assemblage of many qualities, as a peculiar natural quality in itself, not to be attained by effort, and not necessary to excellence.

THROUGH the style in words these characteristic differences may easily be discovered. There are few words in any language which can in strictness be termed synonymous. Many of them may express the same primitive idea, but each expresses it in a different degree, in various circumstances and relations, and under different impressions of the writer's mind. Every quality intellectual or moral has many names by any of which it may be expressed, according to the different reception which it meets from him who describes it; which depresses or heightens its power, according as it is to be commended or condemned. When the same man is spoken of by one author as liberal and by another as prodigal, the same country by one traveller as bleak and by another as romantic, the same theory by one critic as ingenious and by another as extravagant, the moral character and habits of the writers can alone account for this diversity, and through the medium of their language this diversity may be pointed out. Even the same fact will be related in various words according to the intent and dispositions of him by whom it is related. When it is said that Brutus *killed* Cæsar, the fact simply is stated; and when we

say that he *stabbed* Cæsar, the fact is related circumstantially; an addition is made of the mode in which the act was accomplished. But when we say that Brutus *murdered* Cæsar, our assertion goes beyond the fact, and we pronounce an opinion on the criminality of Brutus. Words of the first and second class form the proper language of historical narrative; words of the last by their reflex or secondary significations are the language of the writer's character. Hence the greater the simplicity of style, the more proper for an historian; and, on the other hand, the more vain the historian, the greater his fondness for displaying himself and putting forward his own opinions, the more faulty is his style. On this ground it is that the style of Mr. Gibbon as an historian is extremely unfit for imitation: his work is much more an history of his own mind and opinions than of the decline and fall of the Roman empire.

WERE it possible for the human mind to divest itself in an instant of the passion to which it had immediately before been subject, and to view every thing which comes before it as wholly new and perfectly singular in its nature, still an author would have some style of thought arising from a predilection for certain modes of considering his subjects, founded on the peculiarity of his natural understanding, his education and intellectual habits. But as many of the objects are not new, what at the present time occurs will coincide with or be judged of by what has formerly been thought on the same subjects, or on such others as are by some of their numerous

rous analogies connected with them. What therefore is at any one time said has probably been often before thought, and is part of a system of opinions which have long had an influence on the understanding and on the practice. The dispositions of mind too are more permanent, the force of habits too stubborn to give place at whatever moment an author chooses for writing; what is written in conformity to the reigning disposition will be written with spirit, and appear to the author in a high degree true, natural and forcible. If a man be dissatisfied with himself he will on very slight occasion quarrel with any person who comes in his way: if an author is peevish or choleric his writings will shew his discontent; they will exhibit gloomy prospects of nature and melancholy views of life. In the manners of foreigners we observe many national prejudices, and in the conversation of every individual we see the singularities of his mind; an author then, who must be supposed in like manner affected with his national and individual prejudices, will betray them to such as can view his character from a distance, and examine his writings under different impressions.

THAT these indications of character are in most writers sufficiently strong appears from this, that even in those who are under the influence of immediate inspiration they are perceivable. The Deity makes use of the natural man as the instrument of his communications, and the several pages of the sacred volume shew the distinct habits and dispositions of their respective authors. Thus the character of St. Paul is
fully

fully delineated in his epistles: the dignity of his spirit and the energy of his mind appear in his words as well as his acts: his learning and his professional habits shew themselves in his allusions to passages in classic authors, and in the sources of his metaphors. St. Peter's natural vehemence is exhibited by the rapidity of transition in his thought, and the boldness of grammatical construction in his sentences. And St. John, the disciple whom Jesus loved, pours forth the grateful return of his heart in dwelling particularly on his master's discourses, and shews the general mildness of his nature by frequent and earnest exhortations to benevolence and love.

EVERY particular relating to the moral character and habits of an author is of much importance to his readers. Without some acquaintance with these we should in many cases fail of comprehending his meaning, and in no case should we be able rightly to appreciate his judgments. Many of his words are relative while they are deemed positive, denoting comparisons made by his own mind according to standards indirectly and imperfectly represented. Many of his opinions are conveyed by stealth in his writings, left to produce their effect on the reader by the collective force of many minute atoms of misrepresentation. Many of his decisions rest more on his authority than his arguments; and to learn the value of his authority, to enquire into the means of his information, and to examine the probable sources of his prejudices, is necessary to enable the reader to ascertain by all due allowances the actual

actual and limited truth. The enquiries which are thus useful to assist a reader's comprehension may be in a much higher degree useful to an author. To make the detection of vice in literary characters more easy would in all probability have effect on the morals of authors, and through them on the world. The critic would perhaps learn to overcome his resentments did he know that it was impossible to conceal them from the public; and the traveller would learn to venerate truth, when he found that the vanity which prompted him to exaggerate must betray itself in his writings, and bring universal discredit on his testimony.

THE general modes in which such enquiries are to be conducted, and the exact degrees of probable evidence which will support particular conclusions, it is not easy on this first view of the subject to determine. Something of a nature analogous to this has in particular instances been done, where from proofs furnished by the works themselves the precise time at which they were written is detected, and the author, his age, his rank or his country ascertained. Some valuable treatises of literary controversy proving certain supposed ancient writings genuine or otherwise, some judicious observations of modern historians and critics separating what in very remote periods is fabulous from what was fact, and all that occurs any where relating to internal evidence of the truth of narratives and the credibility of witnesses, will be found to throw light on this subject. The remaining part of this essay will contain some specimens of this theory applied to discover the indications of
habits,

habits, moral and intellectual, of dispositions and external circumstances in the writings of known authors, and in some instances to trace out their operation.

THE lights in which the same subject appears to different authors are indeed so very different that it is not possible to read a page of the copious index to the edition of the English Poets, or even the quotations under the same word in a Dictionary, without finding something characteristic of the habits or disposition of the author. Thus wine is by Congreve after Ovid spoken of as in alliance with love, and by Gay as putting time and care to flight; Swift pronounces that

Wine, powerful wine, can thaw the frozen cit,
And fashion him to humour and to wit,

after which he employs a page in satirically describing its effects on several of the public characters of the day; but Milton, whose disposition was religious, and whose habit was strict temperance, speaks of the *sweet poison of misused wine*, and introduces it as a topic to be commended by the crew of Comus, and condemned by the chorus of Samson Agonistes. Thomson in his beautiful description of night has given its visible marks with minute distinctness; he talks of the glow-worm *twinkling with its moving radiance*, and tells that

. . . . a faint

. a faint erroneous ray,
 Glanc'd from th' imperfect surfaces of things,
 Flings half an image on the straining eye.

Milton, who had for many years lost the advantages of the visual ray, and had not visible images so fresh and accurate in his fancy, has described night by its effect on the animal creation, by the silence which accompanies it, and the fanciful and classic imagery of Hesperus and the moon. Night with Young is virtue's immemorial friend, and loud calls on devotion; to Waller it only gives an opportunity of discovering the charms of Mira's mind, by concealing the dazzling splendor of her personal graces.

ATTERBURY and CLARKE have both written sermons on this text: "If they hear not Moses and the prophets, neither will they be persuaded though one rose from the dead." Each of them begins by explaining the occasion on which those words were spoken: but Atterbury in the course of his explication shews us the fitness of the rich man's making his request particularly to Abraham, and describes with pointed irony the voluptuaries of his own day under the character of the sensualists of the evangelical times; while Clarke in his introduction exactly ascertains how far the rich man's reasonings were just, and wherein lay his mistake. Each then proceeds to the main body of his discourse, and here Atterbury considering the position in the text as a truth rather surprizing;

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and one not likely to meet ready acceptance on the first proposal, employs himself to limit its extent so as to secure to it a more favourable reception; while Clarke prefaces his main argument by proving, from the design of religion and the faculties of man, that perfect and irresistible evidence on these points is not to be expected.

ATTERBURY on his first head of proof establishes that such a message as that in the text sent to a wicked man would not be complied with—that he would doubt of its reality, and find out natural modes of accounting for it—that he would suppose it some dream of a melancholy fancy, or some trick of his unbelieving acquaintance—and that even if he should receive it at first as a revelation, the progress of time would take away his horror, and the raillery of his companions laugh him out of his persuasion. On his second head of proof he then argues that the evidence specified is in reality a less probable or powerful means of conviction than the actual evidence of the gospel—because the gospel evidence contains resurrections from the dead, with many other proofs—because the evidence required exerts all its force on the first impression, after which it is ever afterwards in a declining state, whereas that which is given gains ground by degrees, and the more it is considered the more it is approved—and lastly, because the force of the motive in the one case is particular and confined within a single breast, whereas the other is an universal standing proof, tried and approved by men of all descriptions,

descriptions, and falling in with the general sense and persuasion of those with whom we converse. Clarke proves first that God has given all the intrinsic evidence from the nature of the thing itself that it is possible to be conceived, with all the external proof from unquestionable testimony that was ever given to any matter of fact in the world—and secondly he proves that such as will not be persuaded by that evidence would not, by reason of the wickedness of their hearts, be persuaded by any other evidence which their own fancy could suggest.

ATTERBURY concludes with several inferences directly pointed against practical errors or received prejudices—against the unreasonableness of expecting miracles on occasions of little importance—against the belief of such frivolous miracles—against pretended stipulated appearances from the dead—against our objecting to the degree of evidence vouchsafed to us because others have had such as we deem irresistible—and he concludes his inferences (which take up a third part of his whole discourse) with an exhortation to magnify the divine wisdom, which hath so ordered the first proofs of our faith that they will be equally satisfactory to the end of time, his conduct in the moral world being similar to that in the natural, and reasonable motives being preferable as instruments of conviction to astonishing by immediate miracles. Clarke's inference is in one page—that if we free ourselves from those unreasonable prejudices with which carelessness, and want of con-

fideration, and unrighteous practice are used to blind us, we shall be fully convinced by the evidence vouchsafed us of the truth of christianity.

I HAVE given minutely the schemes of these two sermons, because perhaps there is not any where to be found a more complete contrast of habits and dispositions exemplified in two compositions of the same sort and on the same subject. The Bishop of Rochester, a man of elegant literature, of much knowledge of the world, and of political habits and associations, considers his subject with refined ingenuity and practical address, displaying an extensive acquaintance with human manners, and a perfect insight into the prejudices of the heart. Clarke, whose habits were originally formed to academic studies, and who through his life continued a man of scientific research, steadily pursues his train of important demonstration, without any endeavour to find out novel topics, or any deference to preconceived notions, with little light from experience, and little attention to practice. It is not unpleasant to observe Clarke glancing with a careless and hasty view at some of the principal topics on which Atterbury so largely dilates. Supposing the message in the text conveyed to the wicked, "as soon as the present terrible apprehensions were ceased," says Clarke, "it is extremely probable they would find some way or other to ascribe it all to the delusion of fancy and imagination, and that their old vicious habits and desires and beloved sins would again by degrees prevail over them." These
collateral

collateral points however he will not go out of his way to discuss, satisfied that if he can by one undeniable chain of reasoning establish the position in the text, what may occur on probable grounds against it is not worth consideration. Atterbury, who knew how ill the truth is received which opposes a prejudice, how much attention is always paid to him who shews an accurate knowledge of the thoughts of his hearers, and how easy it is to convince after you have silenced an objection, considers all these practical topics at full length. On the whole Clarke looks for what will prove, and Atterbury for what will persuade: Atterbury would affect his audience, and Clarke will convince his readers.

EVEN in translations of the same passage, through their common likeness to the original, the characteristic difference of the translator's habits will break out; as several portraits of the same person will to a judicious eye discover the painter as well as him who sat for the picture. The following are translations by Pope and by Cowper of the beautiful passage in the sixth book of the Iliad, where Hector takes his infant son Astyanax into his arms:

Thus having spoke, th' illustrious chief of Troy
 Stretch'd his fond arms to clasp the lovely boy.
 The babe clung crying to his nurse's breast,
 Scar'd at the dazzling helm and nodding crest :
 With secret pleasure each fond parent smil'd,
 And Hector hasted to relieve his child.
 The glittering terrors from his brows unbound,
 And plac'd the beaming helmet on the ground.
 Then kiss'd the child, and lifting high in air,
 Thus to the Gods preferr'd a father's prayer. POPE.

So saying, illustrious Hector stretch'd his arms
 Forth to his son, but with a scream the child
 Fell back into the bosom of his nurse,
 His father's aspect dreading, whose bright arms
 He had attentive mark'd, and shaggy crest
 Playing tremendous o'er his helmet's height.
 His father and his gentle mother laughed,
 And noble Hector lifting from his head
 His dazzling helmet, placed it on the ground :
 Then kiss'd the boy, and dandled him, and thus
 In earnest prayer the heavenly powers implor'd*. COWPER.

MR.

The passage in the original stands thus, vide Clarke's Homer, Il. vi. vers. 466 to end of 475 :

Ὡς εἰπὼν, ὃ παιδὸς ἐρέξατο φαιδίμῳ. "Εκτος.
 Ἄψ δ' ὁ παῖς πρὸς κόλπον εὐζώνοιο τιθήνης
 Ἐκλίθη ἰάχων, πατρὸς φίλῃ ὄψιν ἀτυχθεὶς,
 Ταῖσ' ἔσας χαλκὸν τε, ἰδὲ λόφον ἱππιοχαίτην,
 Δειδὼν ἀπ' ἀκροτάτῃ κόρυθος νεύοι' α νήσας·
 Ἐκ δ' ἐγέλασσε πατὴρ τε φίλος, καὶ πότνια μήτηρ,
 Αὐτίκ' ἀπὸ κρατὸς κόρυθ' εἴλετο φαιδίμῳ· "Ελπίω,
 Καὶ τὴν μὲν κατέθηκεν ἐπὶ χθονὶ παμφανόωσαν·
 Αὐτὰρ ὃν φίλον υἱὸν ἐπεὶ κύσε, πατρὶς τε χερσίν,
 Εἶπεν ἐπευξάμενος Διὶ τ', ἄλλοισιν τε θεοῖσιν·

MR. POPE had formed his established style of elegant poetry before he engaged in translating Homer, a poet whose style was extremely different. To this it is to be ascribed that we have here so many prettynesses which are not to be found in the original—*fond arms—lovely boy—with secret pleasure—glittering terrors—lifting high in air—father's prayer*. I think I can also perceive in this passage the effect of habits of translating even on Mr. Pope. *Dazzling helms* and *nodding crests* were phrases which had become by translating the battle scenes of Homer so familiar to his ear, that though in general more verbose than his author, he could not here dilate the expressions beyond the dimensions in which they had used to appear: he has therefore contracted into one line the substance of two in the original. Had this been the only passage of the Iliad which Mr. Pope translated, I am confident we should have found it, if not more like Homer, yet certainly more vigorous and affecting.

MR. COWPER has been led by his fondness for the simplicity of Homer to too close a literal adherence to the words of the original, in prejudice of the sentiment and the sense. Thus because the word *νοήσας*, usually signifies an act of attention voluntary and protracted, Cowper has rendered it in this passage, *he had attentive marked*, an expression utterly inapplicable here, as unsuited to the age of the infant and the terror he shewed. The word should be taken here in its secondary signification, for the bare intellectual act of perception. The word *ἐγέλασσε* in like manner Mr. Cowper has rendered *laughed*,
though

though its meaning in this passage is by the Scholiast in his note (which Mr. Cowper gives) pronounced to be somewhat different in degree from its ordinary one which alone our English term *laughed* expresses. There is not any one English word perhaps which can render $\pi\eta\lambda\epsilon$, but surely it would have been better to have used a periphrasis than to have translated it by the mean and vulgar term *dandled*.

ON comparing these two translations with the original it does not appear that either of these gentlemen, however great their merits, seems to have rightly felt the beauty of this passage. The mode of motion denoted by $\epsilon\kappa\lambda\acute{\iota}\nu\theta\eta$ is not at all expressed either by *fell back* or *clung*: the one is too sudden and violent, the other describes what might perhaps have been the state after the movement had taken place. Mr. Pope was never married: he was not a man of domestic endearment, or family observation: and without knowing any thing of the private life of Mr. Cowper (which from many passages in his works I am convinced is perfectly amiable) I think we might venture to assert that he did not receive Homer's image in the nursery. The passage was too natural and simple for Mr. Pope, and Mr. Cowper has left it mean and profane*.

THE

* $\epsilon\pi\alpha\iota\delta\omicron\varsigma$ is falsely rendered by Pope *lovely* boy. It was not admiration of the infant's beauty, but affection for his child, with which Hector was struck. The delicate epithet $\epsilon\acute{\upsilon}\zeta\acute{\omega}\nu\alpha\iota$, a word of peculiarly soft sound, is not attempted in either version. "Οψι Cowper renders *afraid*, which more usually denotes the look a person assumes than the appearance he exhibits. The fourth line of the original seems to amplify the terror by a full enumeration of the several circumstances immediately crowded on each other— $\chi\alpha\lambda\acute{\alpha}\nu\omicron\upsilon\tau\epsilon\iota\ \iota\delta\epsilon\ \lambda\acute{\omicron}\zeta\omicron\nu$. Mr. Cowper has destroyed the effect

THE enquiry into contrasted character might be carried on in a comparison of plays founded on the same story, criticisms on the same work, letters written on similar subjects, and poems on the same occasions. But to pursue it at full length in this way would exceed the limits usually assigned to essays of this sort. It may be useful to shew that where no comparison of one author with another takes place, still some insight into his character, either in an absolute state, or compared with itself, may to a certain degree be had. The letters of Swift to Stella form one of the most complete pictures of mind which can be exhibited: probably not so studied as confessions which he might have published, but more true and equally discoverable. He left Ireland full of his own importance, with high expectations of cabinet intercourse and political ascendancy. On his arrival at London every object is interesting, every circumstance is made to conspire with the predispositions of his mind; his thoughts are active, his letters exhibit a perpetual flow of vivacity and animation. After some time the aspect of the political horizon begins to change: he finds that he is treated with ceremony where he looked for confidence, and that however

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useful

effect by separating them in his fourth and fifth lines. Cowper's sixth line, except that the word *playing* is ill associated with *tremendous*, is the best in this whole passage. Pope's *And Hector hasted to relieve his child*, has no foundation whatever in the original. Homer relates the simple facts—the motive is obvious. Παμφανώσαν situated where it is in the original excites in my mind the idea of a radiant light thrown by the helmet every way about it as it stood on the ground. The translators have in the general words *beaming* and *dazzling* lost this image. εἶδος in the last line but one has been entirely passed over. So many minute imperfections would not have occurred, or greater beauties would have prevented our taking notice of them, had this been felt as a favourite passage by the translators.

useful a subordinate instrument may be to a statesman, it still must be subordinate; however valuable the secret advice of an humble friend, his merits must remain in secrecy, and his station still be humble. Those even who wished for Swift's assistance were afraid to ask it, and those who admired his talents dreaded his severity. His hopes at last appear delusive, he is discontented with himself for having formed them, and with others for their disappointment. His pride is mortified, his vivacity is lost, and peevish complaints and gloomy reflections fill up the latter part of his correspondence. The whole of it is much to be prized for the vivid picture it exhibits of distinct and progressive variations of mind, and much more for the useful lesson it inculcates on literary men, to repress the suggestions of their own vanity, and not to presume too much on the flattery of friends, or the condescending civility of a patron.

THE Night Thoughts or complaint of Edward Young present another very remarkable picture of mind. Young is himself the constant complainant. Every view of general misery leads him to the consideration of his own state, and the description of his individual misfortunes. The death of Philander—his own sickness—Narcissa—the peculiar rancour of death to him—the perils which await Lorenzo—recur by every association to his thoughts. The mention of friendship reminds him of the loss of friends, and the counterfeit friendships of the great: the address to sleep with which the poem begins selects for a topic its forsaking the wretched, serves as an occasion for inveighing

veighing against the ingratitude of the world, and for introducing the misery of the author :

Sleep, like the world, his ready visit pays
Where fortune smiles ; the wretched he forfakes.

Yet Young at the age at which he wrote his Night Thoughts was the same man in temper and intellectual habits as when so many years before he had published his Satires : exasperated somewhat at the world, which had not rewarded him exactly in the mode and the degree which the author had apportioned to his own merits. He has still that high respect for birth and rank which lead him to accumulate on himself all possible patronage by a separate dedication of each of his Night Thoughts : he gives up the dignified seriousness of his work to flatter, and almost to invoke, a Dutchess who had appeared at a masquerade in the character of Night : he considers himself still as a professed author, and enumerates glory as one of his inducements to write. The same wit, the same imagination, the same antithesis and epigrammatic point, appear in both these great works ; and no other change seems to have taken place in his disposition, than the natural effect of time on a temper, which shewed its discontent in his early life by sarcastic animadversion, and in age by melancholy complaint.

Dr. Goldsmith was a man the singularities of whose life are well known ; and though they may not perhaps be discovered on a superficial view, the traces of them are laid suffi-

ciently deep in his writings. Some of them being such as he could not but know to be his faults, disclose themselves by his efforts to palliate and defend them; others are seen either through his ignorance of their existence, or his ignorance of any mode by which they might be concealed. For that even Goldsmith made some attempts at concealing his singularities is I think evident from his striking out of the Vicar of Wakefield the following, deemed by Johnson a fine passage, which originally was in it. "When I was a young man, being
 "anxious to distinguish myself, I was perpetually starting new
 "propositions. But I soon gave this over, for I found that
 "generally what was new was false." The only reason to be conjectured for his suppressing this was a consciousness that the fault specified was the fault of his youth, and that the reasoning which condemned it was not in his advanced age strong enough to oppose his anxiety to distinguish himself, or to prevent its betraying itself in his conversation by dogmatical, ridiculous and paradoxical assertions.

GOLDSMITH has drawn all his principal personages awkwardly ignorant of the world, as if he had wished to insinuate that this quality is generally an associate of virtue, and a necessary component part of an amiable character. His Good-natured Man, Young Marlow, and Vicar of Wakefield agree in this particular with each other, because in this particular they all agree with the author himself. Goldsmith's plots and stories shew the very same quality: they usually turn on incidents which an author who knew the world could never for a moment suppose

suppose would meet credit. Managers, who had more experience of the ill effects of violating dramatic probability, rejected his plays, and it is a sure criterion of merit in a very high degree that, utterly incredible as his incidents are, his plays and his novels are such favourites with the public. Goldsmith was envious: but he was envious through vanity, not through malignity. Indications of a benevolent heart appear every where in his writings: he rarely indeed praises any other author, but he shews no malice against those he might have considered as his rivals. Whatever he may have borrowed he seldom quotes. Sometimes indeed he quotes himself, a circumstance not so much to be ascribed to a poverty of intellectual supply, as to a vanity which thought nothing better could be said on the subject than what he had before given. Of this vanity he has left many other proofs; he disapproves judging in literary matters by popular opinion: in his own case he will not submit to it, and will force on the public in his printed play the scene which could not be tolerated in the representation. Goldsmith did not study the powers of his mind, for the purpose of employing them with steadiness on such tasks as he could have executed with credit, because he had so high an opinion of those powers that he considered himself equally qualified for every task which might present itself. And it was natural for him who projected a journey to Aleppo to learn the Oriental arts, when he did not know any thing of the European ones, to write a poem with a professed intent of deprecating evils, of whose existence he in his preface expresses himself with much doubt. That *nullum scribendi genus non tetigit*, was the joint effect of
his

his poverty, his vigour and his vanity : that *nullum quod tetigit non ornavit*, is the panegyric of a friend writing a terse inscription on his tomb.

By an induction of many particular remarks of the sort I have here suggested some general observations might be drawn, as to the parts of an author's writing which may be supposed indicative of character, and as to the indications which they afford. When of many particular instances, all equally apposite, one is specially selected, that one will usually be found to afford some indication of the author's habits and circumstances, dispositions and powers of mind. "Whoever," says Professor Reid, "would infer the inutility of logic from finding that men of good sense reason justly without rules, might as well infer, that because a man may go from Edinburgh to London by way of Paris, therefore any other road is useless." This sentence must appear to every reader decisive as to the country of the author. When of several subjects, all equally important, one is more largely insisted on than the rest, it must be because that one is in some especial manner accommodated to the predispositions of the author's mind, peculiarly congenial to his habits, or connected with his fortunes. If the exploits of Julius and Augustus Cæsar, as exhibited on the shield of Æneas, engross nearly one-half of Virgil's description, we can have little doubt of the age in which Virgil flourished, and the protection he courted or enjoyed.

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THE frequent recurrence of any one topic gives information of the same sort. Milton often celebrates the music of the nightingale, for many of his nights were spent in solitary study, and he wooed *the nightly visitations of his muse*. Terence, who was himself a slave, has always produced on his stage some slave of eminent talents and address to be the principal personage in his drama. Smollet, who was a surgeon in the navy, has generally presented to us some naval incidents or naval characters, and makes a ship of war the frequent scene of his novels; while Farquhar, who had been in the land service, has generally introduced a military man into his plays. It is natural for every man to suppose that those circumstances and situations will appear most interesting to others in which he has found himself peculiarly interested; and an author judges wisely when he prefers for his subjects those modes of life with which he is best acquainted. When a critic, not very lavish of his commendation, gives supereminent praises to particular passages, I have always, on examination, found something in them which met his prejudices, his habits, or his temper. Johnson, in his life of Congreve, says, that were he called on to point out the most beautiful passage in all English poetry, he knows not what he would select in preference to the description of the temple in the Mourning Bride. In his life of Dryden he tells us, that the description of the different modes in which the English and the Dutch are, in the *Annus Mirabilis*, recorded to have passed the night after the engagement, is one of the fairest flowers of English poetry. It is somewhat singular that these two passages

express nearly the same mental affection:—horror; dread of that melancholy which results from our own thoughts under strong impressions of internal distress wrought upon by external circumstances, and eagerness to escape from their oppression or to remove them by society. “ Oh! speak to me and let me hear thy voice, “ my own affrights me with its echos,” is the language of Almeria.

In dreams they frightful precipices tread,
Or shipwreck'd labour to some distant shore,
Or in dark churches walk among the dead,
They wake with horror, and dare sleep no more

is the description of the sensations of the Dutch. Any one who is acquainted with the character of Doctor Johnson cannot be at a loss for the circumstance which imprinted the beauty of these passages so very strongly on his imagination.

THE comparative view of those works of an author in which he has succeeded with those in which he has failed would furnish some information as to his dispositions and habits. If Waller's verses on the Protector excelled those on the King, it is not sufficiently accounted for by his remark that poets succeed best in fiction. If Dryden's plays are so much inferior to his other works, it must either have been because he was ignorant of the nature of dramatic composition, or because his necessitous circumstances drove him to a task which he performed negligently. The precise modes of his failure may shew to which of these it

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is to be imputed. When he makes the Emperor of Barbary acquainted with Roman fables and allusions; when he introduces Cleomenes speaking of the Copernican system, two thousand years before its invention, these are evidently the faults of negligence. Dryden's necessitous life is therefore sufficiently established.

THE country and time of an author usually leave very significant marks in his writings. Mr. Wood has, with much ingenuity, ascertained from the direction in which certain winds in Homer's poems are said to blow, and from the Ionian views he gives of the relative situations of the Grecian islands, that he was of a country eastward of Greece: and works, which falsely pretend to be of great antiquity, seldom fail to betray themselves by anachronisms. Thus Bentley urges against the Epistles of Phalaris, that they speak of *tragedies*, before tragedy had existence, or the name its modern acceptation; and Mr. Warton looks on it as decisive against the poems published by Chatterton, that they speak of *Stone-henge* as a *druidical temple*, a discovery made by the laborious discussion of modern antiquaries, against the assertions of antient chroniclers; and that they recommend, instead of the absurdity and impropriety of religious dramas, *some great story of human manners*, an idea which must appear to be the result of taste and discrimination belonging only to advanced periods of society. The time and place when a particular work was composed may sometimes be discovered. From internal evidence the dates of Horace's Odes are, to a

considerable degree of precision, settled by his commentators. The original definition of *pension* in the English dictionary shews that the work was composed before the author had received that honourable mark of royal munificence; and the mention of some cries peculiar to London, with some other characteristic circumstances, shews that when Swift wrote his City Morning he was not resident in Dublin.

THE favourite opinions of an author will, in some way or other, force themselves into his works. It is hard to say into what species of writing a deistical writer will not be able to infuse the poison of his prejudices; and it is unfortunate for the cause of religion that its supporters have not shewn equal address in insinuating and propagating the truth. Political opinions take so strong an hold on the minds of English authors that they almost always bring themselves into notice. Gray has, in his Elegy, shewn us that Hampden, Milton, and Cromwell were, in his mind, the greatest personages in English history, and Mr. Horne Tooke makes, in his *Ἐπεα πτερόεντα*, frequent recurrence to those political situations of his life to which we are indebted for this admirable grammatical treatise. The rank in society which an author holds is usually discoverable in his writings. Otway usually makes poverty one of the ingredients of the distress of his drama. Fielding describes with great fidelity the manners of the lower class, but fails whenever his stories make it necessary for him to bring his readers into those scenes in which he had never walked himself; and perhaps to the want of authors of a
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higher rank it is owing, that we have so few just representations of their manners exhibited on the stage.

THE age of the author at which his several works were composed is generally distinguishable by the works themselves. In juvenile compositions we have common-place remark, poetic mythology, extravagant sentiment, and improbable story. Scholastic information is all which their authors, at that period of their lives, have attained; and vivacity and fancy are their only excellencies. Hence it is that the juvenile works of all our poets have so great a similitude to each other; for to a certain age the knowledge of all men differs only in degree, and not until after that does it differ in kind. Age and dignified experience supply information and mature the judgment. The pastorals even of Pope fall far short of the excellence of his other poems. To the praise of Swift's early good sense let it be observed, that his first compositions are free from the usual faults of immaturity, and almost entirely treat of topics connected with human life. Yet even in these poems we have an evidence that they were juvenile performances; for what but the licentiousness of a juvenile mind, the propensity to imitate without selection whatever has been admired, and to be taken with what is most dazzling, could have induced Swift to undertake the discursive views, vehement transitions and florid diction of the Pindaric odes.

BUT it is now time to conclude these essays. I have done my duty to the Academy in enquiring into the subject they had recommended.

recommended. It is of such importance and extent that I feel I have but touched lightly on a few of its principal topics. On this slight consideration I have found it so interesting that I do violence to my inclinations in not pursuing it farther. I conclude it thus abruptly, for were I to prosecute the enquiry to the extent of my own wishes or the subject's importance, I should offend against the indulgence of the Academy and the patience of the Public.